

# HOW TO RAISE SQUAB

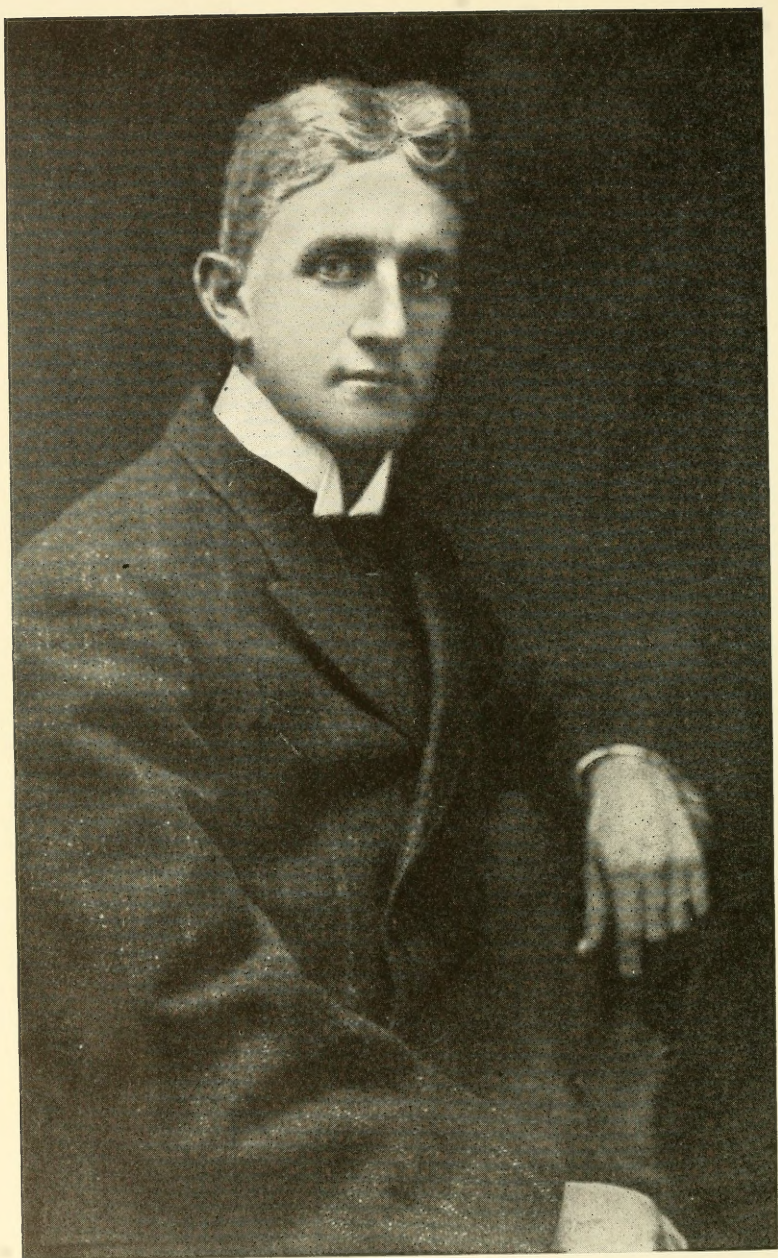










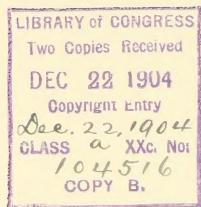


Frank A. Reilly

*H o w   t o   R a i s e*  
*S Q U A B*  
*FOR PROFIT*

By  
*Frank A. Reilly*  
Proprietor  
*The Homer Squab Co.*  
*Lindenhurst, Long Island*

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# *I n t r o d u c t o r y*

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**D**URING the past few years I have been constantly receiving letters from all over the country asking for information and instructions regarding the raising of squabs.

Lack of time and pressure of business have prevented me giving my customers and correspondents the benefit of my experience and success in this industry. I have therefore decided to issue this booklet, and in it I will endeavor to tell, as concisely as possible, the things to do if one is anxious to enter this business for profit, also the things to avoid doing.

Experience, as every one knows, is an expensive teacher. I have been like many others and started out thinking I knew more than was needed. Every year I have learned something new. I have been a close student, and have studied the ways and habits of pigeons for years. Every book I could secure on the subject was eagerly devoured and thoroughly digested.

From poultry magazines, to which I have subscribed, I have learned and read of the experiences of many breeders; and although I could not sanction all the methods they employed, I frequently secured information which later proved profitable to me.

People have written asking me to suggest some manual or treatise they should get to guide them in raising squabs and pigeons. This I could not do, as I do not remember reading any such work which I could conscientiously endorse. In each and every one there has always been something of which I did not approve.

I have always contended, and always shall, that to make a success of anything you have to begin right. There is no use to start out with poor birds. They are cheap to begin with, but later prove expensive. A beginner should start with the best stock, well mated. Naturally, they cost more, but in the end they are more profitable,

as they produce healthier, fatter squabs than the common ordinary pigeons. I favor the Homer strain, and am well satisfied with my success with them. They produce very fat offspring which readily finds a market. In fact, there is a demand for thin scrawny squabs, but they do not bring the price of fat, meaty ones.

If a man starts to raise poultry he will find that it will not pay him unless he has three or four thousand fowls. These would require the undivided attention of two or three men. The poultrymen of the middle West who raise tens of thousands of chickens can ship their products in large quantities at a cheap freight rate, and generally undersell the breeder who is nearer the market, but doing business on a smaller scale. In the squab business it is different, as one man can easily attend to 1,000 or 1,500 birds without devoting his entire time to them.

There is a growing demand for squabs — North, South, East and West. They make one of the daintiest dishes on a hotel bill-of-fare, and are especially recommended for invalids.

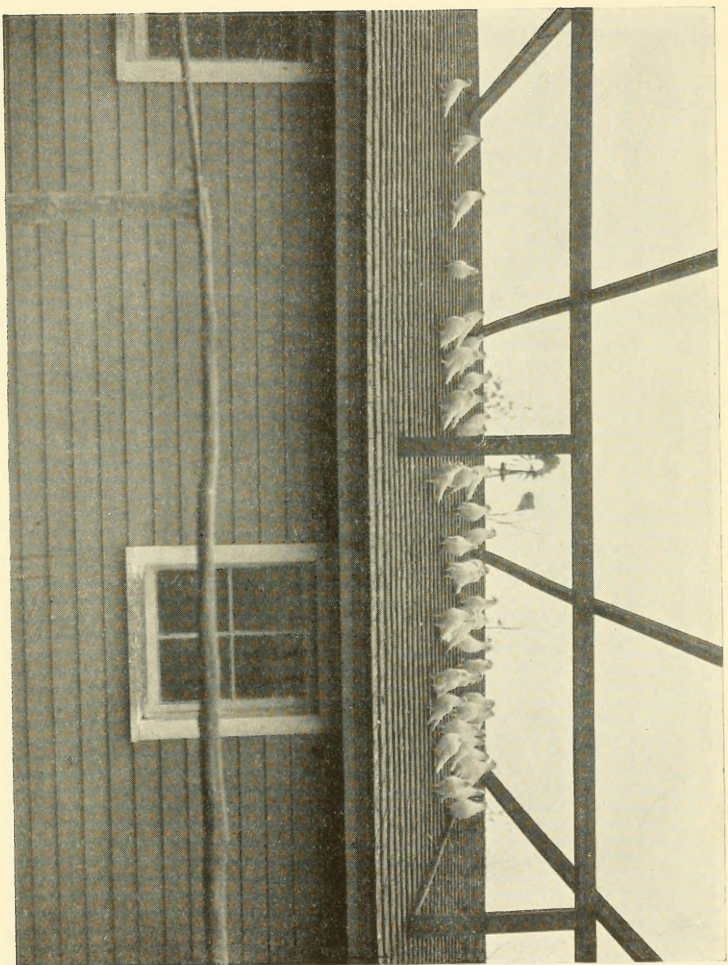
To a beginner, I would suggest starting with fifteen or twenty pairs of breeders, gradually increasing the flock until the returns make it a profitable business.

Anyone who has a small amount of patience, starts with good stock, and follows the instructions contained in this book, can feel reasonably assured that his venture will turn out profitably.

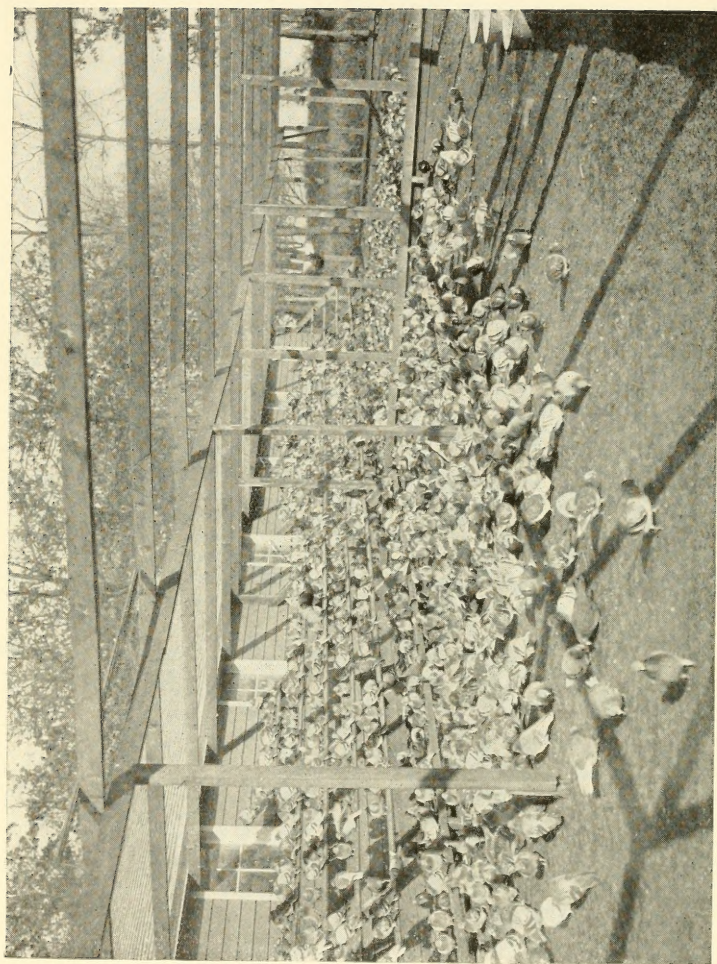
FRANK A. REILLY,  
*Manager and Proprietor.*

HOMER SQUAB CO.,  
Lindenhurst,  
Long Island, N. Y.





A Pen of White Homers



General View of our Breeders



## *Starting with Good Stock*

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THE beginner should exercise a great deal of care in the selection of the birds to commence with. Do not buy the plant of some one who has become disgusted with the business and is ready to quit. His birds are probably poor and sick, and he has probably neglected them to such an extent that they are worthless as breeders. Get your stock from a man who makes it a business to raise and sell breeders. Insist upon getting young, vigorous birds, a year old at least. Pigeons breed until eight or ten years old. I am partial to the Homer breed. Experience with several varieties has strengthened my preference for this strain. I do not like the Duchesse birds on account of their feathered legs. To cross them with Runts or Homers requires too much time and attention. The Dragoon is a bird that is much admired. It is a fine show bird, but in my opinion is excelled for squab raising by the straight Homer, which are excellent breeders, take good care of their young and very prolific. The Runt is a large bird — and very expensive, some of them selling from \$6 to \$10 a pair, and are therefore too costly to a man who wants pigeons for squab raising. Furthermore, they do not take the best of care of their offspring, do not breed frequently enough to make them desirable stock.

There are a number of other breeds, such as Tumblers, Silver, Silver Dun, or White Antwerps, Fantails, etc., but there is objection to each as squab raisers. What is most desired is fat, meaty, clean legged squabs, and the Homer breed in my estimation is the best stock to produce these.

If a beginner gets a good-sized flock together the first year, and has succeeded in getting his birds well mated, he should begin to cull out the poor ones, and always try to keep his stock up to the highest possible standard. It is the object of the breeder to produce as many pairs of squabs from his stock as possible each year, consequently when it is discovered that a hen lays but one egg, instead of two, or is irregular in her laying, it is the wisest thing to get rid of her and find a new mate for the male if he is a good, strong, healthy specimen.

## *D e t e r m i n i n g   t h e   S e x*

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ONE of the most bothersome things which confront the breeder is distinguishing the sex of the birds. Outwardly there is no difference in the appearance of the male and female. Some of the methods employed to secure this information are: examining the bones of the *os sacrum* or vent; holding the head of the bird in one hand and the feet in the other, then stretching them out—if the tail is hugged downward the bird is a male, if it throws its tail it is a hen. If an examination of the vent shows the breast-bone to be short, and the bones of the vent wide apart, the bird is supposed to be a hen; if the bones are close together and the space between them small, it is assumed that the bird is a male. These methods can not always be relied upon, as I have often seen them fail.

By watching the birds closely you can determine without the shadow of a doubt their sex. The male bird, as in the case of every living thing, does the wooing and pursues the female. He does most of the cooing, and is the most active. The hens are finer about the heads, quiet and not combative like the males.

A mating pen is absolutely necessary if your birds are not all mated. A boy can make one, as it is nothing more than a box, 10 or 12 by 24 or 30 inches. A piece of wire netting in the middle divides the box into two pens. Place a bird in each end. After they have seen and cooed to each other four or five days, the separating netting can be removed, and the birds by this time will probably decide to stick together.

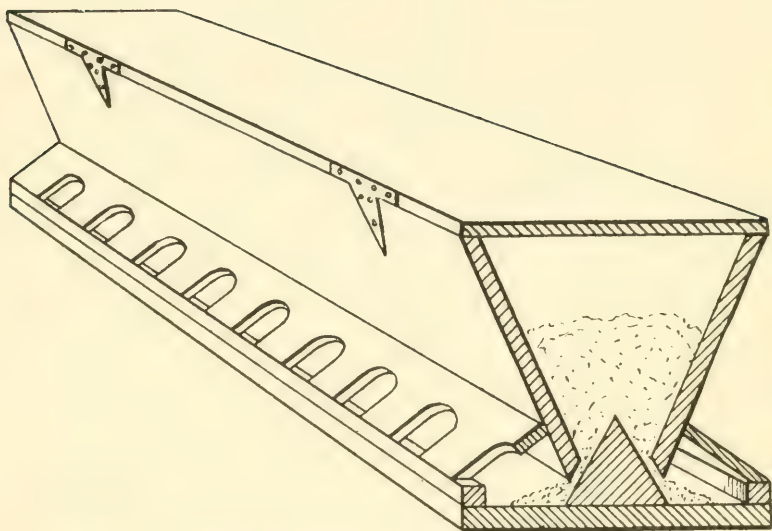
Usually the males are larger than the hens, but not always.

## *F o o d   a n d   F e e d i n g*

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ONE of the most important details in this industry is feeding the stock. Many breeders recommend using good screenings. I have had better results by using sound red wheat, which is eaten up clean, while on the other hand there is much of the screenings which the birds refuse to eat. In buying grain, care should be taken to secure





Perspective View of Feeder partly in Section, showing Construction.

One foot wide, four feet long, one foot deep or high.

This feeder is made of  $\frac{7}{8}$ " pine, with the exceptions of lower side boards where feed holes are cut, which is  $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick x  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Upper side boards are  $\frac{7}{8}$ " x  $10\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Top and bottom are  $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 12" x 4 feet long. End pieces are 10 inches high, making it, with the top and bottom, 12 inches full height of feeder x 4 feet long. There is also one solid piece of spruce 4 x 4, triangle shape, to go on the full length of bottom inside to keep the feed from falling down faster then the birds eat it, also to keep the rats from getting into the feeder. Feed holes are  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " wide x  $1\frac{3}{4}$ " deep.

good, dry material. Never feed white wheat. New wheat and new corn are to be avoided as both create bowel trouble. There is nothing better than good sound dry red wheat, and sound cracked corn. These should be fed separately. Feed wheat three weeks and then give the birds a feeding of corn for a week, and then go back to wheat. Owing to the fact that corn absorbs moisture quickly, it is best to buy only a small quantity at a time, as it will produce sickness and disease of the throat and bowels if fed to your stock when it is damp and musty. Wheat is not so apt to become mouldy, but it should be kept in a dry corner. The corn should be cracked coarse, as if it is too fine there is considerable loss in feeding it. A kernel cracked in two is about the proper size. These two grains are the staple food for pigeons at all times, although a little variety is often beneficial, such as Canada peas, buckwheat, millet and hemp. The latter is a great tonic to weak or sickly birds, and most breeders make it a rule to give their flocks a feeding of hemp at least once a month. It is greatly relished by the birds, but it is very stimulating and heating. The only green food given is lettuce. This is not necessary. Stale bread crumbled up is often relished, and not harmful occasionally.

Much food is often wasted by giving the flock too much. They should only be given just as much as they eat up clean. If you find there is some food left over, the next time you prepare it decrease the amount. The more squabs your birds are raising the more food they will eat. There should always be a box of fresh sharp sand near by. Old mortar is also very good for the birds, and, if possible, it would be good to have some on hand. It should be pounded up fine.

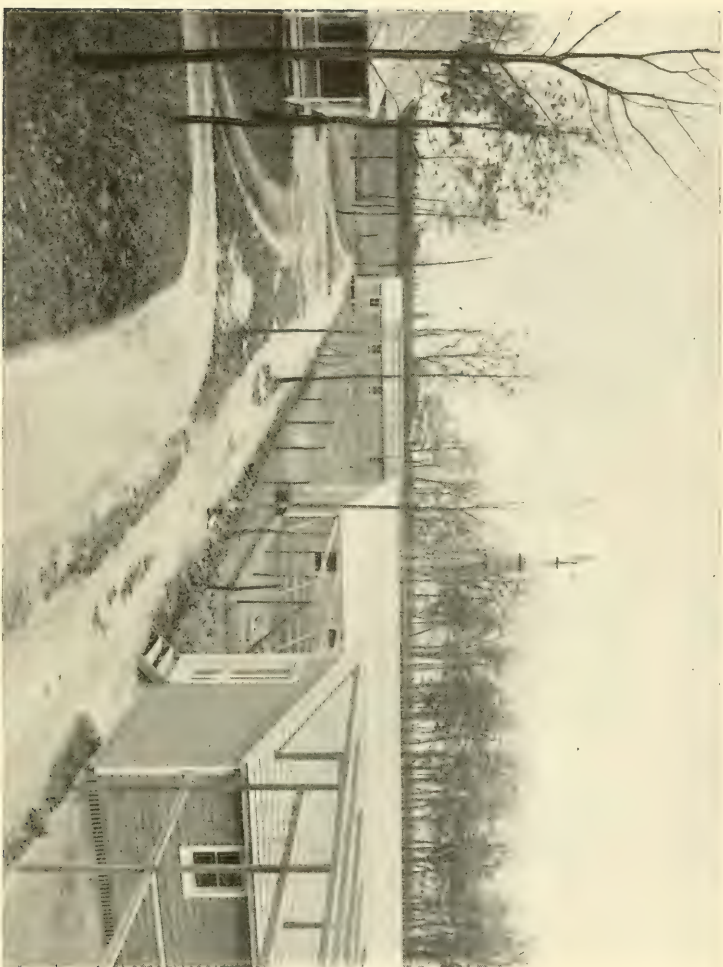
The feeding trough, as shown in the illustration, is much fancied by many breeders.

## *B r e e d i n g   a n d   H a t c h i n g*

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**A**FTER your pigeons are well mated, they should be turned loose in the general house or flying pen. They will go together and will soon begin to build their nests. After this is accomplished the hen should begin to lay. Two eggs are all a hen should cover. She will probably lay the two eggs within two days, although sometimes two or three days intervene between them. Some beginners are inclined





General View of Breeding Houses



A Pair of Eggs



One Week Old



to put three eggs under a pair of birds to hatch. This is unwise, as even if the three eggs prove fertile and produce three squabs, the parent birds cannot properly feed three young ones, and one or two of them are sure to be poorly fed and undersized.

The hen and the cock work on the hatching process equally — that is the male does part of the work. The hen covers her eggs from about four o'clock in the afternoon until ten the following morning, when her lord and master comes to relieve her, and he covers the nest until four in the afternoon. It is well to examine the eggs on the third or fourth day of incubation to ascertain, if possible, if they are fertile. Hold them in the hand between the eye and a strong light. If they are infertile and useless they will be transparent and cloudless, if fertile they will appear to be dark and clouded. Frequently you will discover one egg to be fertile, and the other not. If you are having many pairs hatching you will probably find these conditions to prevail in another nest, and the fertile egg from each can be put under one of the setting pairs, and the other broken up. The disappointed couple will begin in a week or two and have a couple of more eggs to start anew.

It takes from sixteen to eighteen days to hatch the eggs. If at the end of that time no squab breaks through, it is useless to allow the parents to continue setting. While the eggs might have proven fertile by the test on the third or fourth day, the young may have died in embryo — in the shell. It frequently happens that only one bird is hatched. After the parents have fed off their soft stuff for about a week, it should be transferred to another nest where there is but one squab. The parent birds which are known to be the best feeders should be chosen, and the other pair, who will be without any young ones then, will soon be laying again.

Sometimes a mated pair will build and go to nest, having performed all their duties, and not produce any eggs. In such a case it is safe to assume that the hen is barren or too young. If possible, secure two eggs from other nests where three have been laid, and set them under the pair. They will probably sit on them and raise the young. If a hen goes to nest once or twice without laying any eggs, she is undoubtedly barren, and it is best to dispense with her.

Owing to the fact that the parents feed their young — the squabs require no attention from the breeder. About the time the eggs should

hatch, all the food eaten by the parent birds becomes a chymey consistency, called "pigeon's milk." This is fed to the young from the beginning — before they even have their eyes opened. The old birds take the bills of their offspring in their mouths, and by a peculiar motion force it down their throats. This continues for some time, and later, when the squabs are older their parents feed them whole grain. While the parent birds are in this soft food period, their young should never be taken from them, as it will injure the health of the old birds. They have to "feed off" their milky substance, and if they lose their young from any cause, the breeder should take young birds, of about the same age to the nest and let them receive the soft food of the squabless pair. They can then be replaced in their own nest and will again be fed by their real parents.

It will often be noticed that one squab will get more food than the other. Consequently it will become fat and plump while the other will be half starved and scrawny. This can be equalized by putting such a squab in a nest where the parents have not hatched either egg, and have their supply of soft food for their young awaiting to be used.

## *H o u s i n g   t h e   S t o c k*

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CARE should be taken in the selection of the place you intend to build your pigeon house. You should try to have your building warm in Winter and as cool as possible in Summer. It is very important that it should be dry. Dampness and continual moisture are very injurious. Try to have your pigeon house face Southward.

If you have a barn on your place it will save you the expense of erecting a separate building, as you may be able to convert a portion of it into a pigeon loft. Try to make it as airy and light as possible. It is necessary to have a flying pen or flight on the side of the building if you use a part of a barn. This can easily be done by erecting substantial posts, say two by four, and then using one-inch wire mesh netting. Make your place as large as possible as it is only natural to suppose your flocks will increase and will need all the room you can get later on.



Two Weeks Old



Three Weeks Old





Four Weeks Old

If you decide to build a house exclusively for your pigeons I could not recommend a better one than I describe below. It was only after careful study that I chose this style of building, and experience has taught me that my judgment in this instance was surely right. My houses are one hundred feet long, and I will give you dimensions based on that scale.

The building should be set upon locust posts or brick piers, about fifteen inches from the ground, and on these rest the sills. Floor beams should then be laid about two and a half feet apart. A double floor is necessary as it will keep out rats and dampness.

The carpenter will of course put heavy paper between the double flooring. The building should be sheathed, papered and sided. In warm climates it is not necessary to have double walls, but in localities where the Winters are severe it is well to have double walls as this will aid greatly in keeping the building warm during the cold spells. The house should be painted and have a good shingle roof. The height of building should be ten feet in the rear and six feet in front. This will give the roof a four-foot slant. If the roof is made too flat it will leak very quickly.

A house one hundred feet long should be twelve feet wide. Along the north side a passageway of three feet should run the entire length of the building. There should be four partitions which will cut up the building into five different pens, each eighteen feet. Each pen will accommodate 75 pairs or 150 birds. This will leave a space of ten feet at the end of the building which can be used as a feed room or a picking room. The pens should be separated from the passageway by inch boards running from the floor to the roof.

The south side should have two windows with two six-light sashes in each section or pen, and on the north side of the building there should be four six light windows. The windows should all slide so they can be opened to any point desired. It is not necessary to have the windows covered over with wire to prevent breakage, as they are rarely broken.

Inch boards running from the roof to the floor are all that is required to make the partitions or pens. The doors leading from the passageway to each section or pen need only be made of wire screen to prevent the escape of the birds.

The flying pen should be built from the south side of the

pigeon house. It should extend thirty-two feet and run the length of the building. The frame is made of spruce joists two by four, and should rise six feet from the ground. They should be set equal distances apart in three rows parallel with the side of the building, six posts in each row. The outer row supports the end of the fly, thirty-two feet from the building. Another row is set half way in toward the house and a third row alongside of the building. These posts should be so placed as to divide the flying pen into five sections — each being eighteen feet wide and thirty-two long, thus giving each lot of 150 birds a separate room and flying pen.

The netting to enclose this pen should be one-inch mesh. The top of course has to be covered. Doors opening from the building into each section are necessary. There should be a board about ten inches in height nailed around the bottom of the flying pen, close to the ground. There should also be a number of perches in each pen for the birds to rest upon.

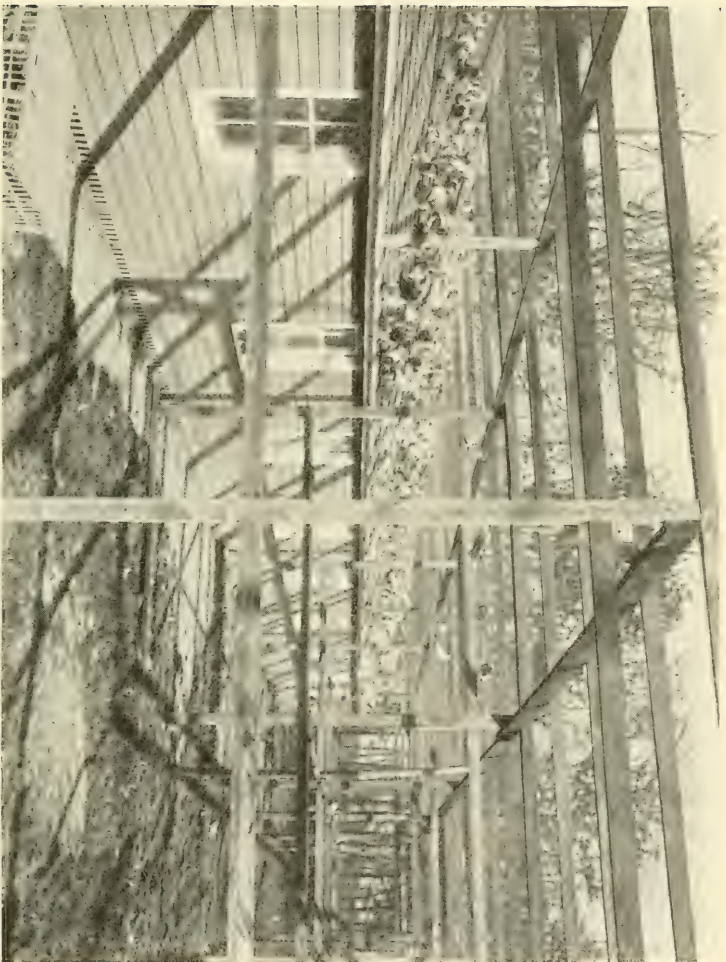
The photographs will show how simply the nests are constructed. They are made of long lengths of boxing board, fourteen inches wide. These form the shelving — really the top and bottom of the next boxes. Then pieces, ten inches by fourteen, are set in the proper distance apart. The finished nests will be fourteen inches from front to back, ten inches from top to bottom and twenty inches wide. After all these are made, take boards one half inch thick, and ten inches wide, and running from the floor to the top of the highest shelf, and nail against the nests. This will half close them, that is, leave only ten inches open. This affords the birds privacy and protection and they always build their nests behind these boards. Squabs grow larger and thrive better in dark corners. Only one nest box is necessary for each pair. The parent birds will start to building a new nest in the opposite corner of their box, after their young are two weeks old.

## *D i s c e a s e s*

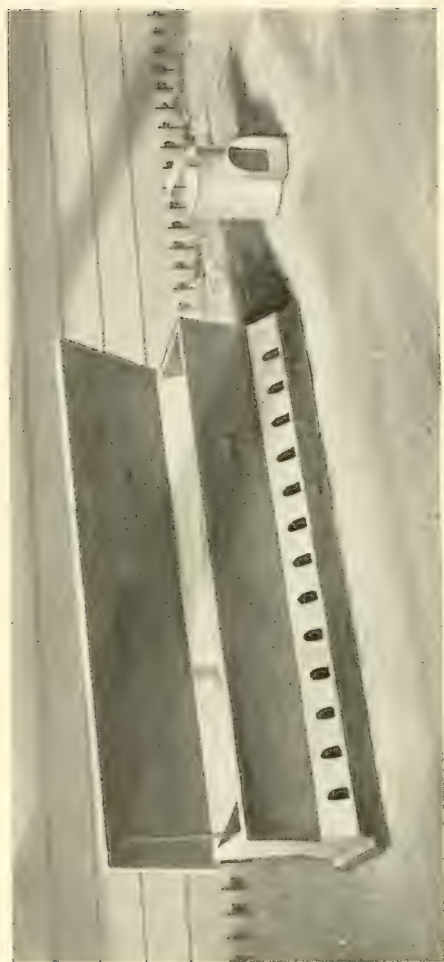
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**P**IGEONS like any other members of the animal kingdom are subject to ills and ailments. A breeder who has a flock of good size expects some sickness among his birds occasionally. He should be alert, and try to treat such cases in the early stages. If the bird





Southern Exposure of our Buildings



Showing Self-Feeder and Drinking Fountain, also Bath Pans

or birds do not respond quickly to the treatment given, the breeder will find it is easiest and best to do away with them. It does not pay to give too much attention to any one bird no matter what the trouble is. After a bird has been sick and recovers, it is often a long time before it will be in condition to begin breeding again. It is better to try to avoid sickness by keeping your stock healthy by having good airy houses, giving them the proper food and keeping them clean. The houses should be frequently whitewashed and kerosene used as a sprinkler as often as possible. It is easier to prevent disease than it is to cure it.

Pigeons are subject to enteritis, roup, canker, cholera, going light, egg-bound, small-pox, wing disease, worms and colds.

## *E n t e r i t i s*

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**T**HIS is an inflammation of the bowels and usually follows a cold. The bird thus affected has a puffed up condition of the feathers, and there is a bloody discharge of mucus. Give a few drops of paregoric three times a day and put the bird in a warm place.

## *R o u p*

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**T**HIS is a very contagious disease, and should be stamped out as quickly as possible. The birds affected with it should be removed from the others, as it will quickly spread. Sometimes a number of birds will be ill with it at once and the breeder will be at a loss to account for its appearance. It is often caused by severe changes in the temperature, especially if the weather has been dry, warm and sunny and then changes to damp, dull and chilly.

Roup is miasmatic, as it appears suddenly. It is a catarrhal disease, and affects the mucous membranes of the throat, nostrils and mouth. There is a discharge of mucous matter from the nostrils, and if neglected it becomes very offensive. When there is difficulty in breathing, make a pill of black pepper and butter, equal parts of each, the size of an ordinary pea and thrust down the throat, which



should also be swabbed with a solution of chlorate of potash. A solution of peroxide of hydrogen should be used to wash the nostrils and the inside of the mouth, when there is a discharge of mucus from either.

## *C a n k e r*

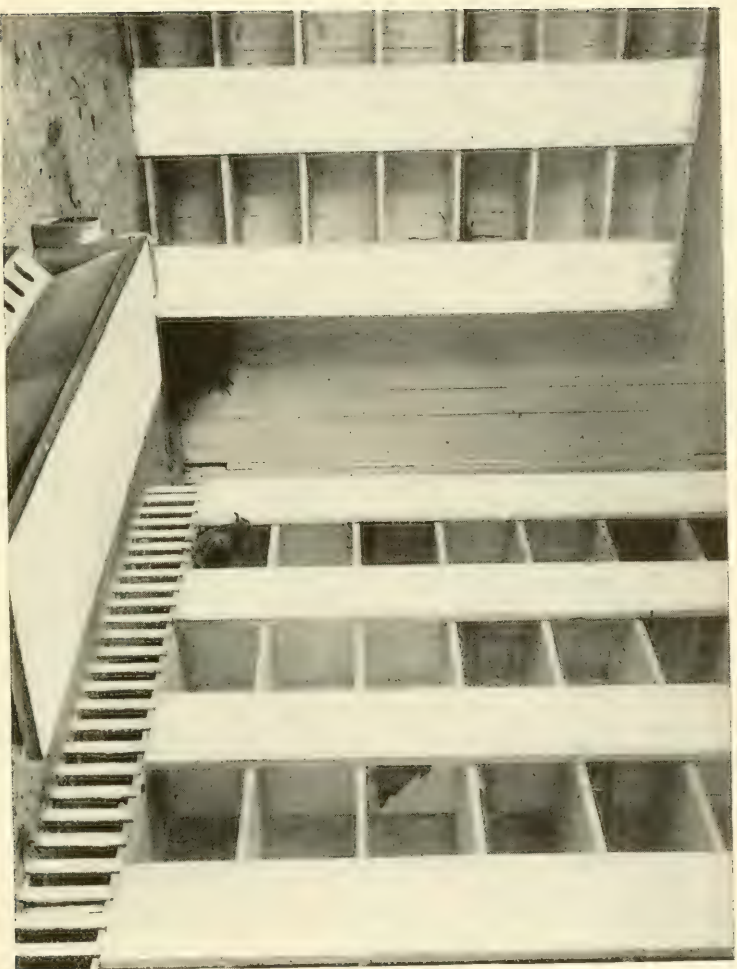
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**I**S a form of diphtheria and is accompanied by high fever, congestion, swelling of the blood vessels of the throat and small white ulcers, which rapidly spread over the mouth and throat. Canker is likely to appear when there is a long period of damp cold weather. Birds affected should be isolated to prevent the disease spreading to others. The nests occupied by them should be thoroughly disinfected. When squabs get canker it does not pay to treat them if the disease has made much progress. If an examination shows canker spots in the mouth, they should be painted with a solution of lemon juice and sugar, or get some powdered burnt alum and apply the same way. Place a small piece of alum in the drinking water. Before placing the affected birds back with the rest of your flock you should be perfectly satisfied that the birds are cured. When you discover some of your pigeons have canker, remove them immediately and put a little alum in the drinking water of the whole flock, and thus probably prevent the disease attacking them.

## *C h o l e r a*

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**T**HIS is caused by feeding the stock new wheat, foul screenings, musty corn, or some other improper food, and it is known as a warm weather disease. The affected bird mopes, becomes weak, and the plumage gets dull. There is a diarrhoea of a greenish color, which can be stopped by putting a tablespoonful of quicklime in about two gallons of the drinking water. Change of food will often effect a remedy, and some breeders place a little prepared chalk in the drinking water. This disease is not hard to cure, and if care is taken in the food given the breeder will not be much bothered with it.



Interior View, showing Arrangement of Boxes



View, showing Two and Four Weeks Squab



## *G o i n g L i g h t*

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**T**HIS is an expression among pigeon-raisers for a disease which is in reality a wasting away. It is accompanied by diarrhoea, which clings to the vent, soiling the feathers and making a very dirty condition. The affected bird's plumage becomes discolored, its eyes become dull and its motions uncertain and erratic. The breast-bone will become sharp and prominent, and the bird will lose its plumpness. Many breeders, when they see indications of this disease, pluck out the entire tail, and I have seen beneficial results from this. A grain of quinine and two cod liver oil capsules should be given daily and mix a small quantity of hemp seed with the ordinary food. The recovery is generally complete when the tail has grown in again. This of course takes time, and the birds are "out of business" quite a little while.

## *E g g B o u n d*

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**T**HIS trouble often occurs with young hens. Usually the first egg a hen lays is passed without trouble, but the second one often is clogged. A hen thus distressed loses the use of her legs, and the breeder knows immediately what is the matter. The egg can be located by feeling the abdomen. The passage way should be rubbed with vaseline or sweet oil and the finger introduced as far as possible. Extreme care must be taken not to break the egg while inside. Then hold the abdomen over steam, which will thoroughly warm and relax the parts. She should then be placed upon her nest where she will soon pass the egg. Before steaming the hen it is good to give a little molasses internally. This will assist her.

## *S m a l l P o x*

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**I**S very contagious and care should be taken to prevent it spreading. Birds so affected should be kept by themselves. It first appears

in the form of small sores around the head and quickly spreads to the neck making a large mass of scabby sores, which should be washed with a solution of blue vitriol. This will usually effect a cure, and prevent it spreading.

## *W i n g      D i s e a s e*

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**I**S a formation of a tumor, which causes a stiffening of the joints of the wing, preventing the bird from flying. If you notice that any of your birds have difficulty in flying and are inclined to drag one wing on the ground, you will undoubtedly discover a small inflamed spot on the wing joint.

This grows larger and larger, if not attended to. The tumor becomes filled with a cheesy, yellow matter, which finally breaks through the skin. The best remedy is to paint the sore with iodine, or rub it with strong spirits of camphor two or three times a day. Often after a cure is effected the wing will remain stiff and useless, but the bird will still be useful as a breeder although it will be compelled to make his nest on the floor.

## *W                      o                      r                      m                      s*

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**S**OMETIMES pigeons will be eating as usual, and not appear to be doing well. In such cases watch their dung, and you will probably find worms. One of the best remedies is garlic. In the morning, before feeding, give a piece of garlic the size of a bean, or make a pill of butter and areca nut and give the sick bird a capsule of castor oil for a day or so. Some breeders use a small piece of gum aloes size of a pea.

## *C                      o                      l                      d                      s*

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**C**AN be remedied by giving a one grain quinine pill and a capsule of cod liver oil twice a day. These medicines are also good to



Passage on North Side of Building, showing Wire Door leading  
to Breeding Pen





Interior, showing Light and Ventilating Arrangement

give as a tonic during the moulting season, when the birds seem to be moping and not shedding well. The sooner the moulting is over the quicker the birds will begin breeding again. As a stimulant, hemp and canary seed should be fed during this period.

As a tonic, it is well to have some Douglass Mixture put in the drinking vessels during the moulting season. A tablespoonful should be put into a pint of the drinking water. It is made by dissolving a half pound of green copperas in two gallons of water; then add one ounce of sulphuric acid.

*M a n u r e*

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**I**N building a pigeon house the perches should be so placed as to be able to scrape and gather up the droppings of the birds. Pigeon manure is much in demand, and all should be saved and collected. There is nothing richer as a fertilizer, but it brings too high a price to be used extensively for that purpose. All tanneries use it, and it can be easily sold. The cleaner it is the more it brings. Try to keep it free from sticks, straw and tobacco stems. Absorbent should be spread on the dropping boards. It should be gathered twice a week and kept in barrels. It is better not to sell it until a quantity has been accumulated.

*F e a t h e r s*

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**E**VEN the feathers of the birds can be turned into profit. They should be collected and put into bags. The feathers the birds drop during the moulting season, together with those plucked from the squabs, should be accumulated and steamed. When you have a quantity on hand they can be sold very easily. The wing and tail feathers should not be kept as there is no demand for them, and they are without value.

## *Lice, and how to Exterminate them*

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THE squab raiser must keep a sharp lookout for lice. Naturally they are more prevalent during the warm weather, but they will haunt your loft or pen winter and summer if you are lax in keeping your plant clean. The more manure in a house the more lice there will be. Plenty of water baths should be provided. These will be used and appreciated by the old birds, but the young ones, not knowing how to bathe, will be pestered a great deal. Many squabs are lost by lice. They become sickly and die off quickly.

I recommend the liberal use of kerosene oil. It does not hurt or injure the birds and is sure death to the lice. It should be freely sprinkled over the empty nests, corners and perches. It should be squirted into all cracks and openings. A man should try to keep his flock as healthy as possible, and one of the most essential things is cleanliness. If some of your birds seem to be lice ridden, and cannot shake them off, it is best to get rid of the birds. Your whole flock might become contaminated and your troubles would increase manyfold.

The constant application of kerosene will keep your place in good condition.

*W a t e r*

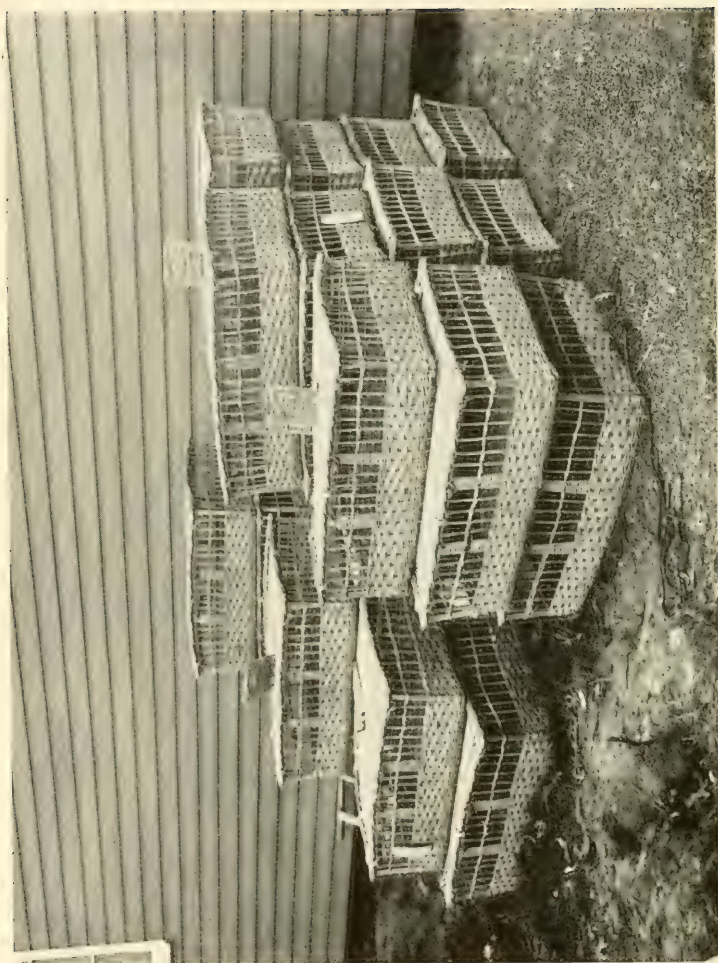
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PURE fresh water is one of the most important things the breeder should look after. Impure, stagnant water causes disease very quickly. If possible, it is best to have a flow of water continually running through the pigeon house. In most cases this is not practical without a good deal of expense. The drinking water should be so arranged that the bird cannot bathe in it. Drinking fountains, so constructed as to leave only a little water exposed, are much favored by some breeders. An ordinary drinking pan can be covered with wire netting, so that the birds can only drink from it. If the drinking pan is flat and open, the birds will bathe in it, and thus impurify it.





Group of Squab Breeders in Shipping Room



Some of our Shipping Baskets

When the bathing pans are put in the yard, the breeder should see that the birds do not drink out of it after some of them have bathed in it, as it invariably will cause sickness.

THE breeder who is anxious to have his birds in good health should always see that a supply of salt is accessible. It should always be handy for the birds who will take it as they require it. Salt is as necessary as water. Rock salt is the best kind to use, as fine salt would probably be quickly devoured with injurious results; as it is easier for the birds to eat, they are inclined to take too much. Place the piece of rock salt where the birds can easily get at it, and it will answer all purposes. Some breeders, however, prefer to use table salt, getting it in five or ten pound bags. It should then be thoroughly wet and placed in an oven and baked. It will bake into a solid cake. The bag is then cut away and it is placed within reach of the pigeons. The caked condition of the salt prevents the birds from eating too much.

A composition known as a "salt-cat" is used by many pigeon raisers. One way of mixing the above is to take about a half peck each of brick-maker's loam, sharp sand, and old lime mortar, the latter, of course, should be free from hair, add to this one-half pound caraway seed, one-half pound coriander, one-half pound of crushed cummin seed and one pint of salt. These should all be mixed together, and dampened with stale urine until it is about like stiff mortar. This should then be made into cakes and baked in the rays of the sun. It can then be placed in the pigeon house the same as the rock salt, and the birds will soon be eating it.

*N e s t s*

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IT is the natural instinct of the pigeons about to lay, to build their own nests, and this desire should be gratified by placing within their reach material with which they can build. Tobacco stems are favored by many breeders as they can be secured very easily, often without cost from cigar makers. These should be thrown, a few at a time, in one corner of the breeding house. The birds will take as many as they require and build their nests in a natural way. The tobacco stems are also good in ridding the setting birds of lice.

*D r e s s i n g S q u a b*

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WHEN about four weeks old, squabs are ready for market. Some parent birds fatten their young more quickly than others, and in some cases the squabs are ready when twenty-five days old. If some of the young ones do not appear to be in good condition it is well to leave them in the nest for another week. The abdomen should be hard and firm, and with a little practice the breeder will soon be able to judge when squabs are in the proper condition. When they begin to leave the nest it is time they should be killed and dressed for market.

Squabs should be collected and boxed up the day before you intend killing them. No food should be given them, so their crops will be empty. They look better and sell better if there is no food in their crops. If by chance you discover there is some grain or food in them, it can be squeezed out with the fingers.

Some breeders kill the squabs by grasping the neck in the left hand, the fingers of which clutch the bird's body. The neck is given a gentle firm pull and then is pushed back, thus breaking the spine, instantly killing the bird.

Another way, and which I consider a better one, is cutting the jugular vein from inside. The bird should be firmly held in the left hand, the wings and feet should be held tightly, and the head held between the first finger and thumb. A sharp-pointed knife



is then inserted in the mouth, and the jugular vein at the back of the head can be easily severed.

If many birds are to be killed it will be convenient if an empty barrel is placed in the killing room. From the top of this barrel hang about four cords, nine inches long each, with a slip knot in the end. Take the squab and pass the noose around its legs, then insert the knife in the back of its mouth and draw it forward. This will cut the brain and cause instant death. Drop the bird on the inside of the barrel, and let it hang there until all the blood runs out. Four birds can be killed in turn quickly this way. The plucking of the feathers should be started as soon as the bird is bloodless. This work should be done quickly, but carefully, as it is important not to tear the skin or flesh. The head and tail feathers should be pulled first as they come out easier when the bird is just killed.

When the squabs are picked they should be thrown into a tub of cold water, slightly salted, and left to remain there thirty or forty minutes. This plumps them out and gives them a good appearance, and drives out the animal heat.

The feet and mouths of the birds should be washed, and there should be no sign of dirt or blood on any squab. The wings should be folded across the back and the left leg of one bird should be tied to the right leg of another. Care should be taken to have two birds of about the same size and plumpness tied together.

It is well to set aside a certain day of the week as a "killing day," and then kill only on that day. The squabs can be collected the night before, and kept without food twelve to fifteen hours.

## *S h i p p i n g   a n d   S e l l i n g*

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IN winter or cold weather the squabs should be shipped to market, packed in strong boxes, which should be so constructed as to permit the circulation of air. The birds should be laid in layers, breast down. Do not put more than six layers of birds in a box, as they are apt to be crushed and flattened. Place the poorest birds at the bottom, leaving the best ones for the top.

In summer place a layer of cracked ice in the bottom of the box, and then a layer of squabs, and thus alternate until the box is

filled. The ice will naturally melt, and the water dripping down on the birds will keep them cool and moist.

Each squab raiser has to find his own customers. There is such a demand, however, that he will experience little difficulty in this direction. If you ship to a commission merchant you will get ten or twenty per cent. less for your stock. As he has to make a profit when he sells them, he is compelled to pay you less than he gets.

It is often possible to build up a trade of your own among hotels, clubs and private families. To do this it is necessary to be able to supply a certain number each week. Private families are the most desirable as they pay the largest prices.

Squabs bring such a small price during the summer months that it is considered best to raise your summer squabs to breeders. By winter they will have mated, and will then begin to produce squabs themselves.

## *A Chapter of Hints*

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**D**O not expect to get rich in six months in the squab business. Success will come to you in time, but you must have patience. Do not make much commotion when you go among your birds. Do your work quietly, and your pigeons will not become frightened when you approach them.

If you find some of your birds very combative, and always trying to pick a fight with the others, it is best to get rid of them as soon as possible. They disturb the whole flock. If you find a bird to be sickly, and cannot determine just what is the matter with it, I think it should be destroyed so as not to infect the rest of your birds.

Use one-inch mesh wire netting in building flying pens. This will keep out rats and sparrows.

Clean out the nest boxes and pens at least once a week with a steel scraper or trowel. After the nests are cleaned, a hoe is used to loosen the droppings on the floor, and all should be shoveled into a barrel or basket which should be kept in the passage way or a convenient corner.

Drinking fountains, bath pans, scrapers, etc., can be bought at almost any poultry-supply store.

# *T a b l e o f C o n t e n t s*

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